

Reflection for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In the Northern Hemisphere the Season of Autumn this year started on September 22, and will end on December 21. With the Autumn Season temperatures become cooler the leaves turn color and fall. This is also a time of harvest with Beer and Wine Festivals very common place. It is also a time of year for State Fairs and Parish Fiestas. Many of these celebrations are historically rooted in giving thanks to God for a bountiful harvest. Many communities historically saw the autumn celebrations as an opportunity to gather together before the cold and dark winter months. For us today in the year 2020 these celebrations that have their roots in the harvest season might not mean as much to us as they did in the past. But these celebrations can connect us with our past and connect us to one another.

This year with all these celebrations canceled or turned into virtual celebrations on the internet one can look back with fondness and remember the State Fair or other autumn events along with the sights and sounds that are a part of these celebrations. For many years my parents in the autumn would attend a number of Wine Festivals around the State of New Mexico, apparently so that they could buy a bottle or two of wine. A number of times I attended the Wine Festivals with them, it was great to spend time with my parents but it was also great to gather with other people and be reminded that these Harvest Celebrations do not just celebrate the harvest and give thanks to God, but they also celebrate the hard work that takes place in the fields that is needed for the harvest to be successful.

On this 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time, the first reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and the Gospel Reading taken from the Gospel of Matthew both mention vineyard, and in fact the vineyard is central to the message of these two readings. It is interesting to note that the word “vineyard” is mentioned 69 times in the Bible, 45 times in the Old Testament and 24 times in the New Testament. In both the book of Isaiah and the Gospel of Matthew, were the first reading and Gospel reading come from today, they both use the word “vineyard” 10 times.

A vineyard is a place where vines are tended; grapes are picked and made into wine. In ancient Israel grapes were a major agricultural product, used primarily for eating and making wine. Throughout the biblical period the vineyard was a part of everyday life for many in Israel. It is not surprising that the vineyard became a biblical symbol for the people of God. In our Gospel today we hear of Jesus sharing a parable with the Chief Priests and Elders of the people. This parable presents us with a landowner who had leased his vineyard to tenants, but when harvest time came the tenants were not willing to share their produce with the landowner. The behavior of the tenants is in sharp contrast with the harvest celebrations in which people come together, give thanks to God and share the joy of the harvest with one another. The parable that we have this Sunday is reminding us that we as the people of God must be willing to share what God has shared with us.